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'LADAKH PROTESTS ONLY TO SEEK DIALOGUE'

Wangchuk, who was arrested last year following violent protests in Ladakh demanding statehood and inclusion under Sixth Schedule of Constitution, said the protests were only to seek dialogue. He noted that any negotiation means both sides will have to make some adjustments. "We were sure of a victory in court, but a win was not enough. I wanted a win-win," he said

In his first remarks after release from jail, activist Sonam Wangchuk said he is looking forward to a 'meaningful dialogue' with Centre on Ladakh

'WON'T RESUME STIR IF TALKS HAPPEN'

- Wangchuk described govt's move to release him as an "extending of hand to build trust and to facilitate meaningful, constructive dialogue"
- "They have offered a constructive, meaningful dialogue. This is what we have wanted, and we had to struggle so much, sit on fast" | **P11**

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SC ON ADOPTION

Maternity leave criteria nixed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@New Delhi

OBSERVING that adoption is part of the right to reproductive autonomy, the Supreme Court on Tuesday struck down a law which said a woman would be eligible for maternity leave only if she legally adopts a child below the age of three months, saying it is discriminatory.

The court also urged the Centre to come up with a law recognising paternity leave as a social security benefit, noting that while the mother is central to a child's development, it would be unjust to overlook the role of the father.

Ruling that age-based classification under Section 60(4) of the Code on Social Security 2020 was violative of Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution, a bench comprising justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan held that an adoptive mother should be entitled to maternity leave of 12 weeks, irrespective of the age of the adopted child.

"The distinction drawn by sub-section (4) of Section 60 does not have a rational nexus with the object of the 2020 Code. The object of maternity benefit is not associated with the process of childbirth but with the process of motherhood...The purpose of maternity protection does not vary with the manner in which the child is brought into the life of the beneficiary mother... Women who adopt a child aged three months or above are similarly situated to women who adopt a child below the age of three months."

De facto Iran leader 'killed'

Tel Aviv claims it eliminated security chief Ali Larijani; US counterterrorism chief resigns over war

AGENCIES @ Jersusalem/Tehran/Dubai

ISRAEL said on Tuesday that it has killed Ali Larijani, Iran's powerful national security chief and de facto leader overseeing the country's decision making.

Tel Aviv also claimed to have killed Gholamreza Soleimani, head of the Basij paramilitary force of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, in a strike in Tehran.

Iran did not immediately confirm or reject Israel's claims.

Larijani, 68, was last seen in public on Friday at a Quds Day march in Tehran.

"This morning we eliminated Ali Larijani, the boss of the Revolutionary Guards, which is the gang of gangsters that actually runs Iran," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.

According to the IDF, Larijani led the political-security coordination of the Iranian regime.

His death, if confirmed, would be a blow to Iran, which is facing the brunt of a war launched by the US and Israel seeking a regime change in Tehran.

Iranian Secretary of Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani

1. IDF claims Larijani was de facto leader after supreme leader Ali Khamenei was killed
2. Larijani led the political-security coordination of the regime, says Israel military
3. Balanced ideological loyalty with pragmatic statecraft, led nuclear policy and strategic diplomacy

Hormuz: Modi, UAE prez discuss safe navigation

- Modi, UAE President stress secure Strait of Hormuz | **P14**
- **Second LPG tanker arrives from the troubled Strait**
- Mexico offers to host Iran's first-round matches at the 2026 World Cup if needed
- **NATO refuses to police the Hormuz, US President Donald Trump calls it foolish**

Despite the perceived setback, Iran on Tuesday launched a fresh wave of attacks in its neighbourhood, targeting Kuwait's Ali al-Salem Air Base, UAE's Fujairah, and Iraq's Erbil.

DAY 18 | WAR WATCH

The US-Israeli war on Iran is now in its third week, killing 2,000 people in the region and setting off repercussions across the globe due to disruption in supply of oil and gas through the Strait of Hormuz, which is under Iran's control.

Meanwhile, a top US counterterrorism official resigned on Tuesday saying the Iran war is absolutely unnecessary.

Joe Kent, director of the National Counterterrorism Centre, announced his resignation saying he "cannot in good conscience" back the war.

In a social media post, Kent said that Iran "posed no imminent threat" to the US and that "it is clear that we started this war due to pressure from Israel" He urged US President Donald Trump to "reverse course".

National Counterterrorism Centre is tasked with analysing and detecting terrorist threats.

Illicit liquor may come under NDPS Act: Min

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE Karnataka government is planning to bring illegal liquor sales under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, Excise Minister RB Timmapur said on Tuesday.

When concerns were raised in the Assembly over rampant sale of illicit liquor, he said a committee headed by retired IAS officer KP Krishnan has been formed to formulate recommendations for a new legal framework. The government has taken note of widespread illegal manufacture and sale of liquor across the state. To curb the menace, it is also considering amendments to the Karnataka Excise Act and introduction of a stricter law.

Raising the issue, Raichur Rural MLA Banagouda Daddal said controlling illicit liquor sales remains a challenge, especially in border areas and his constituency is on the border of Karnataka and Telangana. He suggested opening more MSIL outlets in villages along the border, alleging that illicit liquor is being sold through local kirana stores. He alleged that people get powder from Telangana, make liquor here and sell it. Such people need to be deported. Youth are getting addicted to illicit liquor and are committing murders and causing road accidents. There is a need for strict action, he said.

CONTINUED ON: P4

EXPRESS READ

Hailstorm, rain across state bring relief

Bengaluru: Karnataka received the season's first mango showers, also called pre-monsoon showers, on Monday and Tuesday. Rain and hailstones were reported from most parts of the state. India Meteorological Department (IMD) officials have forecast that this weather will continue for the next couple of days. A yellow alert has also been sounded for the next two days in some regions | **P5**

40% of young graduates can't find work: Report

PADMINI DHRUVARAJ @ Bengaluru

NEARLY 40% of young graduates in India are unemployed, a figure that has remained largely unchanged for four decades, according to the State of Working India 2026 report by Azim Premji University. The report—which defines youth as those between 15 and 29 years—shows that unemployment among young graduates remains persistently high, with 40% of those between 15-25 years and 20% of 25-29 years unable to find work.

This is not a new trend. The report, which draws from nationally representative labour force surveys, administrative databases, and primary surveys, states that graduate unemployment has "remained more or less unchanged between 35% and 40%" from 1983 to 2023, even as the number of graduates has increased significantly over time.

Even when work is found, stable employment is uncommon. Tracking young graduate men over a year, the report finds about half can find some form of work, but few secure permanent salaried employment. "Among graduates, only about 7% find permanent salaried employment within a year," the report states. The report estimates that the share of working-age population will begin to decline after 2030.

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